

When I'm Close to Jesus - Galatians 6:11-17 – December 31st, 2017

- I've titled today's teaching, "When I'm Close to Jesus."
- The reason I chose this title is because of what the Apostle Paul reveals about himself at the end of his letter to the Galatians.
- I suppose you could say that he is speaking right from the heart to their heart, and in so doing getting to the heart of the matter.
- You'll forgive the simplicity with which I say this, when you get right down to it it's all about Jesus and walking close with Jesus.
- Certainly a close walk with Jesus characterized the Apostle Paul's life, so much so, that his life was blessed beyond measure.
- I say measure because God's blessing on his life was not measured by the world's standards rather; it was by God's standards.
- Before we get into the passage, I think it would be good to point out two very interesting and important details in verse eleven.
- First, notice Paul says he's writing this to them with his own hand. This because, here-to-fore he has dictated to a secretary.
- Here at the end of his letter, he takes the pen in order to authenticate that it's from him, and to also add a personal emphasis.
- This actually ties into the second detail and why it's so important that we know this, and it's that of his writing with large letters.
- Some believe he did so because he had poor eyesight, while others suggest that it was deliberate in order to make his point.
- Namely, that of highlighting and underscoring his closing remarks, which makes more sense in that it fits with the entire letter.
- I would suggest that the Apostle Paul, by the Holy Spirit, is summing everything he's said up to this point with the bottom line.
- It's as if he's saying, "Okay Galatian Christians, I've begged you, rebuked you, and corrected you, so here's the bottom line.
- You're either going to believe the legalists who will distance you from Jesus, or you'll believe me who wants you close to Jesus.
- They want to impress others by outward means of the flesh, while I only want to please God by the inward means of the Spirit.
- They want to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ, while I deem it an honor and privilege to be worthy of persecution.
- They want to boast about their circumcision in keeping the law, while I will only boast about the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- They want to live for and according to the things of the world, while I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me.
- They want to bear the marks of circumcision under the law, while I already bear the marks of suffering persecution for Jesus.
- Please know that Paul did not like to talk about himself or use himself as an example, but when he did, it was for good reason.
- The reason he does so here, is to draw a striking contrast between those walking close with the Lord, and those who are not.
- What follows are three ways that we can know whether someone has a close walk with the Lord, or is just acting like they do.

1. They won't try to impress people (Verses 11-12)

11 See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand! 12 Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.

- Here Paul says that the real reason the Judaizers compelled them to be circumcised was that they wanted to impress people.
- The thought was that getting them to be circumcised would make them look good so they could boast about their influence.
- Moreover, by getting them to do this, they would align Judaism with Christianity, which would mean they avoided persecution.
- Thankfully, Paul, true to form, sees right through them and exposes them as the frauds they are by bringing to light the motives.
- One of the things you could never rightly accuse the Apostle Paul of is that he cared about what other people thought of him.
- Paul had an audience of one, and it was Jesus, if Jesus was pleased, nothing else or no one else mattered to him in the least.

2. They won't be embarrassed about Jesus (Verses 13-15)

13 Not even those who are circumcised keep the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh. 14 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15 Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation.

- What Paul says here is that he was never ashamed of his Savior and the humiliation of the cross and he even explains why.
- He says the reason is because the world is dead to him, and he is dead to the world, which is why he could care less about it.
- In other words, when I walk in step with Jesus, I'm not concerned with being in step with the world; I'm dead to it and it to me.

One commentator wrote, "The world and I are well agreed. The world cares not a pin for me, and I care as little for the world."

3. They won't fear suffering persecution (Verses 16-17)

16 Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—to the Israel of God. 17 From now on, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. 18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

- I cannot think of a better way to end this epistle than the way that Paul does here when he says, "let no one cause me trouble."
- He then says that he has bore on his body the marks of Jesus; referring to all the beatings and sufferings he endured for Jesus.
- One has suggested that he's telling them to stop troubling him because he's suffered enough trouble and persecution already.
- While that may have been what Paul meant, I'm personally of the belief that he was saying, people don't bother me anymore.
- The reason I believe that is because Paul had been through so much difficulty that nothing or no one could get to him anymore.
- As such, he no longer feared what anyone or anything could do to him because he had already endured unthinkable suffering.
- Here's the bottom line in closing, the result of a close walk with Jesus will be a freedom from the bondage to things of the world.
- When I'm that close to Jesus, I won't be ashamed of Jesus, nor will I fear what man thinks of me, or what man can do to me.